

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending. Claims 2, 4, 8 and 9 have been amended. No new matter has been added by way of this amendment. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Claim 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, 1st ¶, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most clearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. According to the Examiner, "the term α -starch does not appear to be a recognized art term. In response to this rejection, Applicants respectfully assert that the term "alpha-starch" (i.e., α -starch) is a term that is a recognized term in the art." First, the symbol " α " as set forth in the specification is the mathematical depiction for alpha, as readily know by one of ordinary skill in the art. For example, Applicants performed a search on the U.S. Patent data base entering the term "alpha-search". A significant number of patents were uncovered that contained the term " α -starch." A copy of said search results is attached as Appendix A for the Examiner's convenience. In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 5 and 7-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 11-032608 to *Sasahara*, while claims 2-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the same reference. Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being

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unpatentable over *Sasahara* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,209,185 to *Chikazawa*. These several rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention relates to a water-decomposable material for treating excretions from animals, such as cats, dogs, pigs, rats, and the like. The invention is characterized by the use of "fine α -starch that readily dissolves in water and becomes sticky when brought into contact with water."

JP 11-032608 to *Sasahara* relates to a treating material that comprises a flat granular body have a two-layered structure which comprises a flat core material comprising hydro fillet organic fibers and a layer comprising water-absorbing polymer powder and organic fiber power covering the entire surface of the core material in an approximately constant thickness. According to this reference, a surfactant may be added to the flat core material that comprises the hydro fillet organic fibers (see *Abs.*) However, this reference fails to disclose the α -starches as set forth in independent claim 1.

U.S. Patent No. 5,209,185 to *Chikazawa* relates to an artificial litter material that absorbs water and offensive odors that are commensurate with the urine and feces left by pets. According to this reference, the litter material also dissolves immediately and is carried away with ease if disposed of directly into a flush toilet or a waste water system (see col. 1, lines 59-56). This reference, however, fails to cure the deficiency of the *Sasahara* reference. Specifically, *Chikazawa* fails to disclose the use of α -starch particles, as set forth and claimed in the present invention.

In the present invention, in place of the water-absorbent polymer powder disclosed in *Sasahara*, and the zeolite as an inorganic substance as disclosed in *Chikazawa*, the α -starch as set

forth in claim 1 is used as a biodegradable natural substance for eliminating the drawbacks associated with the *Sasahara* and *Chikazara* references. In particular, the α -starch increases the ease with which the animal excretions-treating material are disposed of in flush toilets.

In addition, the present invention mixes fibers and α -starches to thereby form a skin layer. As a result, the fibers that constitute the skin layer rapidly absorb excretions to prevent them from spreading over a wide range of such an excretion-treated material (see page 8, line 23 to page 9, line 2 of the specification).

Further, the tapioca-corn pill as disclosed in *Chikazara* are different from the tapioca α -starch particles of the present invention in that the shape and the production method thereof are different. ^{not claimed} Also, the animal excretion-treated material disclosed in *Sasahara* has a two-layer structure, while the litter material for pet animals disclosed in *Chikazara* has a one-layer structure that is formed by coating zeolite onto tapioca-corn pellets. ^{1st layer} ^{2nd layer} For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully assert that independent claim 1 is patentable other the cited references whether considered individually or in combination. Accordingly, reconsideration of the rejections are respectfully requested.

In view of the patentability of independent claim 1, for the reasons above, dependent claims 2-9 are patentable over the prior art.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the application is respectfully submitted to be in condition for allowance and prompt, favorable action thereon is earnestly solicited. However, should

the Examiner believe that direct contact with Applicant's attorney would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: August 7, 2002

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alphonso A. Collins', written over a horizontal line.

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COMPLETE SET OF PENDING CLAIMS

1. An animal excretions treating material comprises particles, each particle being composed of a core layer of fibers and a skin layer to cover the core layer, the skin layer containing α -starch and fibers.

Sub B1
A1
2. (Amended) The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers constituting the skin layer are short fibers having a mean fiber length in a range of 0.02 to 1 mm.

3. The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the mean particle size of the α -starch in the skin layer is at most 0.25 mm.

A2
4. (Amended) The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the composition of the skin layer is in a ratio of α -starch to fibers in a range of 20 to 80 and 80 to 20.

5. The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers in the skin layer are those of pulp.

6. The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the α -starch in the skin layer is tapioca starch.

7. The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers in the core layer are those of pulp.

8. (Amended) The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, which has a bulk density in a range of 0.1 and 0.5 g/cm³.

9. (Amended) The animal excretions treating material as set forth in claim 1, the particle has a diameter in a range of 2 and 20 mm.